

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Quarterly Newsletter: March 2013



Employee Assistance Program

How to Build Rapport

Whether in our personal life or at work, we may find ourselves needing to interact with someone new. Success may hinge on how quickly and effectively you can get along with the other person(s). Folks that are good at building rapport communicate well, are much more efficient, are valued by employers, and report being happier both at home and work. Try the following suggestions to improve this very important social skill.

- Lean forward towards the person you are talking to, with hands open and arms and legs uncrossed. This body language will help you and the person you are talking to feel more relaxed.
- Give plenty of eye-contact but be careful not to make them feel uncomfortable.
- When listening, nod and make encouraging gestures.
- Smile!
- Use the other person's name early in the conversation.
- Summarize and clarify what you think was said.
- Show empathy. Demonstrate that you can see things from their point of view.
- Build on the other person's ideas.
- Be non-judgmental towards the other person. Let go of stereotypes and any preconceived ideas you may have about the person.
- If you have to disagree with the other person, give the reason first then say you disagree.
- Find links between common experiences or points of agreement.
- Admit when you don't know the answer or have made a mistake. Being honest is always the best tactic, acknowledging mistakes will help to build trust.
- Offer a compliment before a criticism.
- Ask open ended questions. These are questions that answer "who, what, when, and why" and can not be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" response.

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Characteristics of a Lasting Relationship

1. Thinking positively about your partner. This means deciding to focus on the good qualities your partner brings to the relationship and avoid holding on to the negatives for longer than you need to. By holding on to old resentments, you set yourself up to make the little every day annoyances in the relationship into big problems.

Folks that are in good relationships are able to recall many more pleasant experiences together than negative ones.

2. Enjoying novel and challenging activities. Spending time together is also important, however, it is how you spend your time that influences your relationship satisfaction even more. There is some science behind this one.

Our brains release pleasurable chemicals like dopamine when engaged in exhilarating activities. Recent studies on this suggest that couples can improve their love for each other when exploring new and challenging activities together.

3. Expressing affection. Expressing love in physical ways, as simple as a touch on the shoulder or kiss on the cheek, serves to maintain relationships over time.

4. Feeling happy. People who feel happier about their own life also have stronger feelings of love toward their partners. The opposite also seems to be true in that your relationship is likely to suffer if you're experiencing personal distress that is not managed appropriately. Similarly, if your relationship is in trouble, your own personal happiness will suffer as well. Either way, it's important for you to seek help before these negative feelings take toll on your mental health.

5. Having a strong passion for life. People who approach their daily lives with zest and positive emotion seem to carry these intense feelings over to their relationships as well. So, if you want your relationship to have passion, put that emotional energy to work in your hobbies, interests, and even everyday activities.

Your brain's reward centers respond similarly to love as to getting excited about your other daily interests. Getting "fired up" in these areas of life translates into firing up the feelings you have toward your partner.

Quick Fixes to Manage Anxiety

1. Don't forget to breath!

It may sound simple but simple often works. When feeling anxiety our breath often quickens and becomes shallow. Deep breathing works by resetting this "fight or flight" stress response. Focus on breathing from your diaphragm and **NOT** your chest. Breath slowly and deeply, making sure that your exhale is twice as long as your inhale. It may be helpful to say "re" at the inhale and "lax" through the exhale.

2. Use an Anchor. Focus your complete attention on something around you. If you are holding a cup of coffee, notice on how the cup feels in your hand, what it smells like, the color, the warmth of it, and savor each sip (use all your senses).

3. Repeat a Mantra. A mantra is something positive you tell yourself that is true, realistic, and in the present.

"I am safe right **now**..."

"Though tough, I **am** managing it..."



Postpartum Depression

It is not uncommon for women to experience mood swings right after birth. This is sometimes referred to as the "baby blues", it is short-lasting (usually 7-10 days in duration) and affects 50-80% of women that usually does not require any form of treatment for things to get better. If symptoms like crying episodes, anxiety, significant changes in appetite, energy level, poor self-worth, guilt, and depressed mood persist, a check up to rule out Postpartum Depression would be in order.

Postpartum depression affects 10-15% of women any time from a month to a year after childbirth. Researchers aren't sure what causes postpartum depression, but think that the dramatic shifts in hormone levels during pregnancy and immediately afterward combined with

Childbirth as a major life change are likely factors toward depression. The good news is that, like diabetes or heart disease, postpartum depression is an illness that can be successfully treated with medicine and therapy.

If you suspect that someone you know is suffering from postpartum depression, it's important to show understanding, support and encouragement during this stressful time to help the new mom avoid the stigma, shame and isolation often associated with postpartum depression.

Responding to Criticism at Work

Step 1: Remain Calm

If you are like most people, the knee jerk response to criticism is to feel resentment, inadequacy, and/or anger. Understand that jumping too quickly in expressing these strong emotions may make the situation worse. Give yourself a moment for composure by taking a few deep-breathes before responding.

Step 2: Paraphrase

"So, what you're saying is..." Repeating in your own words serves three purposes: (1) It buys you more time to think without the pressure of having an answer at the ready, (2) allows you to double check to make sure you've understood, and (3) depersonalizes the problem. In other words, it refocuses the issue away from something personal and back to the real concrete problem. Make sure to maintain appropriate eye contact and watch your tone. Don't say, "So, what you're saying is my work is messing up the whole department..." This will definitely make you sound defensive. Instead, stick to the facts and don't exaggerate.

Step 3: Open up Both Perspectives

Be willing to look at it from the critics perspective. People generally aren't expecting you to say, "I can see how you might get that idea, but what I haven't explained yet is..." This tactic throws the other person off balance for a moment and more able to hear your argument/evidence in a non-defensive manner. Being the first to understand their point of view sets the tone for the other person to do the same with you. You stand a better chance of the critic hearing you out.

Step 4: Move on Politely and With Dignity

You may have done a good job maintaining your composure, paraphrasing, and opening up to his/her viewpoint but the critic is showing no signs of letting go. Now it's time for a graceful exit, "That's certainly something to think about going forward, and I appreciate

the feedback," is about the best you can do.

Responding to a Co-Worker

Consider the source. Knowing who the critic is and his/her reputation is key. Is the critic someone who is respected or simply someone who criticizes others in a desperate attempt to boost him/herself? If it's the latter, you may have already solved the problem by calmly repeating the criticism and acknowledging the feedback. However, if your critic's opinion carries weight, it may be worthwhile to set aside some time to talk further and problem-solve. Stay open-minded as you might have something to learn.

Responding to a Supervisor

Schedule a meeting to hear him/her out. Are you sure the criticism isn't valid? If it is, adjust your approach/work accordingly. Again, be careful to stick to the real problem, remain calm, paraphrase, and be open to his/her perspective.

If you remain convinced that the criticism is off the mark, request follow up meetings in order to keep the dialogue going and opportunities for insight. Remember, remain calm and focus on tangible problems versus making things personal.

Tips For Relapse Prevention

- 1) **Find Support:** Seek out groups and join organizations that reinforce your sobriety.
- 2) **Make New Friends:** Friends that continue to use alcohol/drugs may not always be the best to socialize with. Keep a telephone list on you of positive people you can call if in a pinch.
- 3) **Gratitude List:** Keep a list and add positive things, accomplishments and feelings you've achieved since sobriety. Use it as motivation.
- 4) **Watch Triggers:** Be mindful of what can set you back and don't test yourself.
- 5) **Stay Healthy:** Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat right.
- 6) **Be Reasonable:** Recovery is a process, so set small achievable goals...one day, 5 days and 10 days at a time.

Being Harassed by Debt Collectors?

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, **FDCPA**, dictates how debt collectors can act when collecting a debt from you. These are things a debt collector can't do. (*Consult with a professional should you have questions or concerns*).

- 1). Ask you to pay more than you owe.
- 2). Ask you to pay interest, fees or expenses not allowed by law.
- 3). Call repeatedly or continuously.
- 4). Use profane, obscene or abusive language.
- 5). Call before 8am or after 9pm.
- 6). Call at times the collector knows or should know are inconvenient.
- 7). Use or threaten to use violence if debt not paid.
- 8). Threaten action they cannot or will not take.
- 9). Illegally inform a third party about your debt.
- 10). Repeatedly call a third party to get your location information.



EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/medical problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

Previous Issues of the EAP Newsletter

View Archived EAP Newsletters and access additional resources

at : <http://city.milwaukee.gov/der/EAP>

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Why Volunteer?

I know, you are living a busy life that leaves little time for anything else. So why do it? Well, besides the obvious positive impact on others and the community as a whole, volunteering has a unique way of keeping you healthy. How?

Volunteering offers an opportunity to meet new people and extend social ties. The satisfaction you receive from volunteering boosts self-confidence and self-esteem, which are two main factors in fighting off *Depression*. In addition, studies have proven that older adults that volunteer actually live longer, healthier lives by staying active and promoting a positive attitude.

Volunteering may also be good for your career. It may offer new experiences, expose you to different skills, and allow for you to brush up on your people skills.

For more information on volunteering in Milwaukee try:

www.volunteermilwaukee.org



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